



Migration Patterns in New Spain

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When Columbus set sail in 1492 the boundaries of the world changed as they knew them. This pivotal event triggered colonization of the western hemisphere by Europeans. The objectives of this presentation are to understand migration patterns in New Spain, how they impacted record keeping and how you can use these patterns to locate records for your Hispanic ancestors.

NORTHERN NEW SPAIN

Where is it? The southern section of North America including much of the lower United States. This included, at varying times, the states of Florida, Louisiana, Texas, New Mexico, Colorado, Utah, Arizona, Nevada and California.

Some early Spanish settlements are now within the boundaries of the United States. Jamestown and Plymouth were inserted for reference.

1559. Pensacola (Florida)

1565. St. Augustine (Florida)

1588. Founding of El Paso del Norte (western Texas)

1598. San Juan de los Caballeros (New Mexico)

1607. Jamestown

1608. Santa Fe (New Mexico)

1620. Plymouth Colony

1690. Mission San Francisco de la Espada (present-day San Antonio)

1692. Mission San Xavier del Bac (near present-day Tucson)

1769. San Diego (California)

WHY MIGRATE FROM SPAIN?

There were several factors that pushed people to leave their homeland while other factors enticed or pulled immigrants into New Spain. Some of these same factors also evoked migration within New Spain. A few of these push-and-pull factors are:

Economic

- Searching for a new trade route to the spices of India
- Gold
- Land
- Fame and fortune
- A better life

Military service

- Freely joined
- Conscripted

Religious persecution

- Inquisition

Political unrest

- Mexican revolution

HOW DID THEY GET THERE?

Before the invention of air travel, migrants arrived in the New World by ship. Once they reached dry land their migration continued on foot, horseback, or pack animal. Here are a few resources that may be helpful in locating early immigrants.

Resources for locating records and understanding the historical geography

Chapman, Charles Edward. *Catalogue of Materials in the Archivo General de Indias for the History of the Pacific Coast and the American Southwest* (Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 1919).

Bermúdez Plata, Cristóbal, Luis Romera Iruela, and Maria del Carmen Galbis Diez. *Catálogo de pasajeros a Indias durante los siglos XVI, XVII y XVIII* (Archivo General de Indias: Sevilla, 1940), FHL INTL Book 946 W2sa. The Family History library only has volumes 1-7 (1509-1599).

Bolton, Herbert Eugene. *Guide to Materials for the History of the United States in the Principal Archives of Mexico* (Washington, D.C., Carnegie institution of Washington, 1913), download a copy from [Archive.org](http://archive.org).

Boyd-Bowman, Peter. *Índice geográfico de más de 56 mil pobladores de la América Hispánica* (México: Fondo de Cultura Económica, c1985), FHL INTL Book 980 W2bb.

Boyd-Bowman, Peter. *Patterns of Spanish Emigration to the New World* (Buffalo: Council on International Studies, State University of New York - Buffalo, 1973), FHL INTL Film 1410948, Item 10.

Boyd-Bowman, Peter. *Índice geobiográfico de cuarenta mil pobladores españoles de América en el siglo XVI* (Bogotá: Instituto Caro y Cuervo, 1964-1968), FHL INTL Book 980 W2b.

Gerhard, Peter. *A Guide to the Historical Geography of New Spain* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1993), FHL INTL Book E3g.

Gerhard, Peter. *The North Frontier of New Spain* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1982), FHL INTL Book 972.1 E3g.

Guía de fuentes para la historia de Ibero-América conservados en España (Madrid: Dirección General de Archivos y Bibliotecas, 1969).

[New Spain](#), FamilySearch Wiki article, (Online: FamilySearch.org).

FamilySearch Help Center Classes on Hispanic Immigration

[Online Resources for Mexico](#)

[Crossing the Frontera](#)

[¿Mis Antepasados Vinieron de ...?](#)

EL CAMINO REAL

Major migration pattern from Mexico City through central Mexico ending at San Juan Pueblo, north of present-day Santa Fe, New Mexico. Major cities along the route include:

Mexico City

Guanajuato

Lagos de Moreno

Aguascalientes

Zacatecas

Durango

Corralitos
Allende
Hidalgo del Parral
Chihuahua
Juarez

El Paso
Albuquerque
Santa Fe
San Juan Pueblo

EL CAMINO REAL DE LOS TEJAS

Major migration trail leading from Guerrero, Coahuila in northern Mexico north and east ending at present-day Natchitoches, Louisiana. This route was also popular with early settlers in Texas. To learn more, visit the site of the [El Camino Real de Los Tejas National Historic Trail Association](#).

THE PACIFIC COAST AND THE SOUTHWEST

Early arrivals to the California coast came by boat across the Pacific from the Philippines. Overland travelers who came in to California traveled north through the western side of Mexico.

Early California missions and their founding dates

1769 San Diego de Alcalá
1770 San Carlos Borromeo de Carmelo
1771 San Antonio de Padua (Monterey County)
1771 San Gabriel Arcángel
1772 San Luis Obispo de Tolosa
1776 San Francisco de Asís
1776 San Juan Capistrano
1777 Santa Clara de Asís
1782 San Buenaventura
1786 Santa Barbara

Old Spanish Trail

The Old Spanish Trail was used to connect the settlements in and around Santa Fe with those in the Los Angeles area. Its various variations meandered through northern New Mexico and Arizona, down the Colorado river valley and west in to California. Northern routes of the trail also run up through southern Colorado and southern Utah. To learn more about this migration path, visit the website of the [Old Spanish Trail Association](#).

Juan Bautista de Anza

In 1775 he recruited settlers in Culiacan, Sinaloa and then traveled north up the west coast of Mexico before turning inland towards Sonora. Once in Arizona he followed the Santa Cruz and Gila rivers to where they joined the Colorado river. Once in California he traveled mostly parallel with the coast and up to San Francisco. To learn more about this migration path, visit the website of the [Juan Bautista de Anza National Historic Trail](#).

LOCATING RECORDS

Why jurisdictions matter

Government created records and the locations where they are stored changes when control over the jurisdiction changes. Catholic Church records may change archived locations as diocesan boundaries changed.

Events affecting jurisdictions in New Spain

1803. Louisiana Purchase
1821. Mexico independence from Spain
1836. Texas wins independence from Mexico
1848. Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo
1853. Gadsden Purchase

State	When added to the U.S.
Arizona	1848. Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo; 1854 Gadsden Purchase
California	1848. Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo
Florida	1819. Adams-Onis Treaty (Florida Purchase)
Louisiana	1803. Louisiana Purchase
New Mexico	1848. Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo; 1854 Gadsden Purchase
Texas	1836. Independence from Mexico; 1845. Joined the Union

Finding Aids

Antonio García-Cubas' *Diccionario Geográfico, Histórico y Biográfico de los Estados Unidos Mexicano*. There are two versions available in the FamilySearch Wiki article [Mexico Gazetteers](#). A [PDF version](#) and a [name searchable version](#). Use this historical gazetteer to locate jurisdictions in Mexico.

[Maps.Google.com](#) can be used to view surrounding areas to facilitate radial searches if your ancestor may have moved around.

When looking for migratory ancestors try the following:

- Search surrounding cities or parishes
- Follow roads out of the community, most likely to the north when leaving or coming from the south when arriving. Often roads and trails change only slightly over time.
- Try the FAN club approach. Where were Friends, Associates and Neighbors from?
- Was your ancestor involved in mining? Check mining areas in Mexico which included San Luis Potosi, Guanajuato, Zacatecas, Chihuahua, and Sonora.
- Keep a research log to avoid repeating searches.